

HMC

HERTFORDSHIRE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



EVEN EDUCATED BEES DO IT

CRUX

AUG 1998 - VOLUME 6 ISSUE

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EDITORS NOTE



Dear all,

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of Peter Thorogood on Tuesday 25th August at about mid day while descending the Inner Rottal Ridge of the Jungfrau (details back page).

I climbed with Peter a few times over the past year and found him to be quietly spoken, interesting and fine company to be with. A number of you will remember he presented at last years slide show. I have only known him a short time but will miss him.

The Funeral will be held at 3.30pm at Harwood Park Crematorium, Stevenage, followed by tea for those attending at Hitchin Priory at 4.30pm (approx) on Friday 11th September.

His wife Lynne has said that anyone who would like to attend is very welcome.

Our thoughts go out to Lynne and their two sons at this time.

We are having a collection for the Snowdonia Appeal in memory of Peter. Please send your donations to Myself, Albert or Jane, by 16th October.

He will be missed by all who knew him

Phil Whitehurst

ROACHES REINVESTED

Up down went she - ah but such fun be this. After all it's been so long. Oh and I am getting good at placing protection too! But then again surely she'd realise it's usually on the outside or is this a new way?

Now up went I; and oh dear these jugs were always out of reach, and so many nuts I tried - now I know size is im



Jason

portant!! Jason he idd pop into view - help help or was it shit shit I am about to.. Oh no thought I with a high pitched whimper my nuts can't hold out much longer! So chip-chip-chippie went I...

Now Jas' down I am going to lump you one; when/If I get up - but me thinks perhaps not it's too late for you.

But be the moral of this - on the mantle be Jas' safe and secure, but only just, and still a way to go - all alone - now up did climb 'Golum'. The selfish one did climb up (oh oh did I get my climbs in today!) - well let's hope his fucking friends let him down!! and be glad he's not HMC!! and last but not least let's applaud Jason on his epic success' on less than a weeks climbing well done!!

Now Phil went from side to side and even when not climbing too! Pete did you really feel so safe?



Pete in his far from waterproof tent

And full marks to Norman on his expansion of well placed nuts!!
And of course I now know why these mountaineers talk about scrambling 'cause I don't know whether to make the move or not - should one go forward or not? Maybe I shall just observe - after all it's a long way down if I get it wrong!

But let's face it, at the HMC you gain so many friends let's see there's Rigid, Offset, Cam'g baby - to name a few but now I am rambling too - so that's it for now!

Nick Erith

Editors note - No I don't understand it either!

Routes completed at the Roaches (Saturday)

Kestral Crack (HS 4a) - Pete (Lead), Phil
Lucas Chimney (S) - Nick (Lead), Jason
Prow Corner (VD) - Norman (Lead), Anne
Something Better Change (E2 5b) - Phil (Lead), Pete
Fledgelings Climb (S) - Nick (Lead), Jason
Damascus Crack (HS 4a) - Pete (Lead), Phil
Mauds Garden - Norman, Anne (3 times both lead)
- Nick (Lead), Jason
Contrary Mary (VS 4b) - Phil (Lead), Pete
Broken Slab (VS 4b variant) - Pete (Lead), Phil
Capitol Climb (HS 4a) - Phil (Lead), Pete
Cold Finger (VS 4b) - Phil (Lead), Pete



Nick Erith What are you doing?

TO BAG OR NOT TO BAG?

An account of the Whitsun Meet, Glencoe

Phil, Gary and I went up on Thursday evening to Selkirk and stayed overnight at Splodges house - Gary's childhood friend. This meant we were at the Onich hut by 1pm on Friday. We had lunch and then went back up to Rannoch Moor- Gary and Phil to do the Rannoch Wall on Buachille



Anne & Mike on top of Meall Deraig

Etive Mor and myself to do Stob Deraig.

I went up by the Coire na Tulaich route - this is an easy scramble to the saddle below Stob Dearg and a gentle walk to the top. I was just looking longingly at the rest of the Buachille Etive Mor ridge when I looked at my watch and realised that we had arranged to be down at the car park by 6.45 to get back to the hut to let in the others. I had done the rest of the ridge before - many years ago, so this completed the three Munroes on that section. We got back to the hut to find that the hotelier next door had let the others in - so I could have done the ridge after all.

On Saturday, Mike and I decided to do the Aonach Eagach, which has beckoned to me over the years on my many trips through Glencoe. I have heard several stories about this, accompanied by deep long drawn-in breaths - how dangerous it is, how you need a rope to do certain sections and so on but was reassured by Tony and Geoff that it was OK. I dreamt about falling off several times during the night!! I went with Mike, and made the mistake of reading the guide book before we went. I worked out it was 2,700 metres of climbing - which I didn't think I could do. So I went into the mode that all mothers of young children do when they are doing adventurous things - such as getting stuck in the quarry on Y Aran, a Zero Vis dive to 30 metres, a half-hour decompression stop after a 54 metre dive, driving home with Phil at over a ton, and more recently, gliding - "I shouldn't be doing this with two young children at home."



Anne & Collette on top of Na Gruagaichan

Mick Bail drove us to the start of the walk and by the piper in Glencoe and we ascended Am Bodach via the SE ridge and the two Munroes - Meall Dearg and Sgorr nam Fiannaidh - and came down below The Pap and through Glencoe village. In the event, the scrambling was fine and really enjoyable - it requires a lot of concentration for two hours or so on the main pinnacles, but nothing particularly difficult. The total ascent was 1210 metres according to the altimeter. The guide book refers to a route to avoid the most exposed of the pinnacles, by scrambling along a "path" on the northern side. We started along this, but it was very wet with lots of grassy tussocks and a long, long drop. It was much safer to go back up to and over the pinnacle. So the anxieties were unnecessary. I have done quite a few of the scrambling routes in Lochaber in the past and never had any trouble on them - probably because I never read any guide books so I didn't know there were supposed to be difficult bits. I can see how Aonach Eagach requires ropes in winter, and would love to go back and do it then.

The mist was in and out during the day so we didn't see much until we dropped down onto the saddle below the Pap of Glencoe where there is a wonderful view of Loch Leven. A relaxing end to a strenuous day.

When we got back to the hut that evening, we discovered that our erstwhile Meet Organiser (MBA) had failed to tell us that we only booked ten beds with the warden and 14 of us turned up, when five members of another club arrived unannounced. This resulted in a very hasty berth-moving, with Splodge ending up on the floor of our dorm! He gallantly announced the next morning that he didn't mind at all - in fact he often slept on the floor in preference to a bed at times!! As we had just sorted out the sleeping arrangements on

Saturday a further hopeful arrived and ruefully went away, muttering something about this not being unusual and he would come back on Monday night.

The next day, Sunday, I went with Richard and Colette to do two Munroes in the Mamores - Na Gruagaichan and Binnean Mor. These were the first Munroes that Colette had done. It seemed to be the locals' route for walking their dogs - there must have been at least half a dozen - the owners all claiming it was the dog walking them not the other way round!! Colette was nearly bowled over by one of them on the arête between Na Gruagaichan and the South Top. I made the mistake of dragging her up the boulder-sized scree south ridge of Na G., while Richard added an extra top to his route while we were doing so. We met Geoff and Tony at the South Top who had watched all this and admired Richard's lack of care for us!!

On Monday we made the mistake of listening to the weather forecast which meant that everyone was spooked off going for a long walk. Richard and Colette went to look at Eilan Donan, several of us went to Fort William to use the cash machine and a visit to Nevis



Gary Bebb on Pinnacles, Aonach Eagach (on the Monday)

port. At about noon, sitting outside Nevisport, drinking coffee and reading a scrambling guide, I realised there was something wrong with the High Street - it was dry and there was no rain. I think that's a first for me in Fort William - so decided it wasn't the place to be. I caught a bus to Kinlochleven and walked back to the hut by the inappropriately called West Highland Way and up and over the saddle between Nan Gualinin and Doire Ban down onto the North shore of Loch Leven. The whole of

the Ballachuillish Horseshoe came into view as I reached the top of the saddle - so much for the weather forecast!! If I had started out earlier, I could have done Am Bodach on the way - not that I was in Munro-bagging mode at all!!

On Tuesday, Phil and Gary kindly offered to drop Mike and me at the bottom of our respective walks whilst they finished cleaning the hut, packed the car and made a long traverse of Fort Bill High Street with detours to Nevisports and the Fish and chip shop. Mike did the Buachille Etive Mor Ridge while I did the Hidden Valley. At the top of the waterfalls, I decided to scramble up to Beinn Fhoda by a steep gully and to return through Lairig Eilde to the waterfall and back to the car. There was a superb view of Aonach Eagach from the top - between the blizzards - and of Rannoch Mor, Stob Dearg and Buachille Etive Beag and Stob Dubh.

Evenings were spent in the Carn Mor Hotel next door to the hut, Jane and Dave celebrating their sixth wedding anniversary in style in the restaurant, the rest of us imbibing ale and sampling the local whiskies - I can recommend Oban - and enjoying the convivial company.

Phil drove us home at great speed, Mike kept his eyes shut all the way!!

Anne Berk

FIELD TESTING A GPS



I have recently purchased a Magellan 2000 XL GPS to help in the mountains and I took the opportunity to try it out on the Whit weekend. It has the ability to track 12 satellites, a 24 hour battery life but - because of the wobble - is only accurate to about 100 metres. It gives your grid reference, altitude and

has various navigation screens to give you your bearing, speed over ground and ETA. You can feed in the GR's of up to 200 landmarks and create 5 routes. These can be fed in before you go out on the mountain, which can be useful in misty conditions, as it will point the way to go.

I have always had the suspicion that these would not be too helpful on the mountains, as, with the poor level of accuracy you are likely to be directed over the edge of an arete or a cliff, and its usage so far has proved this to be so. Still, I could have done with it in the mist on Black Peak last year, when we couldn't find the triangulation pillar at the top in the featureless landscape.

I took it up Aonach Eagach on the second day, to assess its use once again. Here, I found it useful to give us a GR and altitude to locate us on the map, then the normal tools of navigation can take over - there is no substitute for compass work and pacing in low vis conditions. I think it is much too bulky really to be carried around all day. The best way to utilise it would be to produce a unit that can be worn on the wrist, rather like the computers we have in diving - it could have a GPS limited to giving only GR and altitude as well as the facilities of the altimeter, timer etc recorder as on Mike's altimeter. At present its size is limited by the size of the aerial and the 4 AA batteries that have to be used to power it. A challenge to the engineers amongst you !!

SPOT THE MEMBER



For a good time call Tony Edwards on 0121 784 4115

CLIMBERS PHOTOS

Photos from the past few months



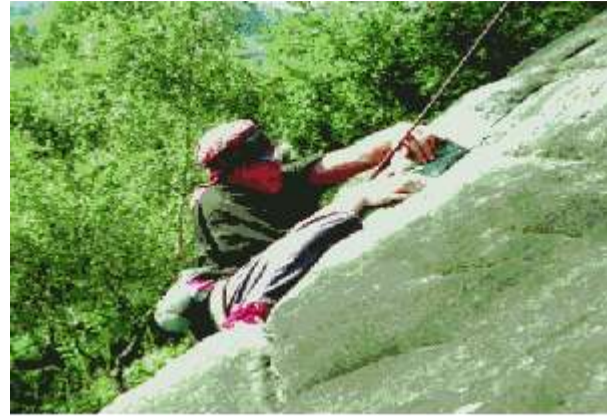
Nick Erith, Roaches



Stepan, Chee Tor



Shaun, Langdale



Phil, Todys Wall, Frogatt



Graham, Isis, Gower



Paul, Browns Eliminate (E2 5b), Frogatt

LAKES



Bill, Belayed by Phil, 3rd pitch, Langdale

Lake District 31 July 1998

I looked down the slab, over the edge and could see a vertical drop, of, well I couldn't see the bottom as the mist was too bad, but it looked over 50 feet drop, so I warned Nick to be careful. Phil had just stepped over the slab, Nick asked for a steadying push from me, I stepped over but my foot slipped and found myself sliding down the slab, I tried to grab onto something and get ready for the fall, but suddenly I stopped. Relief. Luckily I had slid slightly sideways and landed on a small ledge. I looked round to find Shôn crouched ready to stop me, thankfully his quick actions weren't needed. Charles, standing behind me, did manage a grab of my rucksack and hurt his finger in the process, maybe it was enough to pull me from the edge. Whatever, thanks everyone, so only a cut finger to show for my epic!

The drive up to the Lakes was slow through Birmingham for Nick and myself, getting to the Campsite at 8:00 ready for a quick pint and bite to eat, with Albert arriving later in a state indicating he'd sampled most of the pubs between Kendal and Wastwater. Phil, Alfie, Charles and Shaun arriving at 1:00am. The campsite is in a beautiful setting, next to the river and with excellent showers and loo block, nice grassy field with trees to give shade and protection. It is immediately beneath Scafell, which Albert climbed on the Saturday. Phil, myself, Nick, Alfie, Charles and Shaun walked up the Hages crag on Great Cable, and we didn't stop or complain once due to our tremendous fitness. (?) But ascend we did, and chose the classic direct at VD. Alfie was in instructor mode for Shaun our first time out man, and did an excellent job so we have another convert. Welcome Shaun, but farewell to Alfie who is go

ing to Antarctica (yes, the bit with the South Pole) for up to 32 months as part of the British Antarctic Survey team. We wish you luck and er... send a postcard. Don't try to pppp pick up a penguin, you might get your pecker pecked. The climb down was interesting (see above) after the mist came down, but the view down Wastdale just below the mist line was spectacular. We thought about climbing Scafell but discovered the Pub was open so after a long heated discussion that lasted 3 seconds we decided that as a Mountaineering Club we really should go and go to the Pub. It was 4:00pm after all, which is the evening isn't it. After a brief break for showers we went back for some serious French Girl spotting, eating and drinking.

Sunday dawned a misty dull day which closely matched our heads, but warm and soon the sun broke through to bring a windless warm sunny day. We decided that a trip to Langdale would break up the journey home and get us to



some easy access crags. The road to Langdale is over the Hardnott and Wynose passes, which go over some very beautiful, rugged scenery of Lakeland, up and down 1:3 single track roads. Nick, didn't quite appreciate the quality of the scenery,

Preparing at Hages Crag, Great Gable

as his first new car came too close to some precipitous edges, dry stone walls and other cars for comfort.

In Langdale, after a brief coffee stop in the Pub, we did the Arrow Head direct, a small route to its right and the Common route, which was nicely exposed. Nick had a screw loose in his ankle so didn't climb. After another sojourn to the Pub we set off at 7:00 for home. A great trip, a pity we only managed seven. Only one walker and no girls, come on everyone.

Bill Burt

**ALBERT'S KNICKER ELASTIC
- A RESPONSE.**

I would just like to put the record straight concerning this incident of my getting stuck in the quarry. Whilst we were approaching the mine shafts, examining the inclined plane on Y Aran and the workings in general, Keith explained excitedly that there were mine shafts in the mountain and that there was one which you could walk through to, to quote "the other side of the mountain". As a Geographer by training, this implied a bump with a hole through from one side to another



Geographers View of the Mountain



Keith Hirsts View of "other side" of the Mountain

(see diagram).

So when the opportunity came to actually investigate the aforesaid adit through the mountain, I donned my torch and walked through. When we came to the end of it by the pit props, I could see there was a scramble to exit the shaft, but thought the other side of the mountain would be there!! Keith wimped out at this point, so I thought I'd go on. It was quite a scramble up the scree as the whole slope was coursing with water. Imagine my surprise when I found myself in a deep, gaping hole in the hillside dripping with water and not a dry hold in sight. I looked down towards the tiny hole out of which I had just climbed and thought I wasn't going to go back down there, wishing I had a helmet.

I scrambled around for ten minutes trying to get a good set

of holds on the damp, muddy rock, wondering if anyone would remember I was there - would they hear me, maybe I would have to go back down the hole again. I suppose I would eventually pluck up the courage to do the little bridging movement and traverse I thought would take me out, if they had gone. Then Bill appeared at the edge - "You can't get out of there can you?"

The others appeared and we tried to decide what to do and if anyone had a rope- this wasn't supposed to be a scrambling day - Albert said he had one back in the car!! I scrambled over the slab of rock that bridged a cleft in the rock which dropped straight down to that tiny hole and started the traverse, but it was still a little bit slippy and I didn't quite have the confidence to do it solo. Suddenly, Albert found his Knicker Elastic - Eureka- I tied it around my waist and made the move to enable me to scramble out, somewhat red-faced - as I do consider myself to be very sensible on the mountains.

The day continued pleasantly despite the teasing and threats of exposure in Crux. You can see that "quarry" from the start of the south ridge to Snowdon as a deep black scar on the landscape. An enjoyable and amusing weekend in good company was finished off by a pleasant drive in glorious sunshine across the hills via Ffestiniog and Llyn Celyn

Anne Berk

REMEMBER THE NIGHT?



Charles White - Sober as a Judge

HMC LIBRARY

The HMC library is back! Contact Dawn Wyllie for details of books available. Full list in next edition of Crux (Dec / Jan)

almost choke on the Sulphur.

Only 20 miles away is the mountainous region of Huerquehue. Here we trek the Lago Verde trail and get some of the best views of Volcan Villarrica. The trail ascends through beech forests, and past stunning waterfalls. In the upper reaches we encounter Pehuen trees. Always we are surrounded by the sounds of the bird life, spookily adding to the atmosphere.

Back to the train and thence onto Puerto Montt where we obtain passage to Puerto Natales via ship and the Archipeligo of Islands. On this trip shared with two Norwegians, an Australian, a Dutch couple, and a German; time passes slowly. Much of this time is spent updating diaries, reading books, and playing cards. Here the temperatures are much cooler with ice a natural part of the landscape. The trip lasts three days. On arriving we scramble for dry land as a prisoner escapes his gaoler.

The destination of all but the German is Patagonia. He is heading to Antarctica. That must be a



special, wild lonely place to visit. The rest of us catch the bus to Torres Del Paine.

This is the one place that everybody had said we had to visit. After all who hasn't been inspired on seeing these massive granite pillars soaring to the heavens. This end of Chile is one of the most rugged, wild and utterly fantastic areas I have encountered. Storm clouds rush across the sky at mind bending speeds. Light and shade engage in an impossible embrace; lovers grappling in a strange landscape.

We book onto a two day trek and dance and laugh among these massive pillars. To feel its soul, powerful and unmoving, mocking us

feeble and mortal souls. The sun sets and with it the pillars glow, their true textures and lines stretching out before us. I take a picture in a pathetic attempt to capture the scene.

The last day we fly back to Santiago and get a birds eye view of the Andes below. Flying past in only a few hours what took us 28 days to explore. I feel in the beginnings of a love affair, and know that I will return to share many more intimate moments with her...

Phil Whitehurst

PEMBROKE



Here I am, Friday afternoon driving through Central London. It is now after 4pm, and with one further store to visit, the traffic has ground to a halt. Rivulets of sweat make a dash for freedom down my back. The radio blurts out in enthusiastic tones "it's going to be a hot one, with temperatures reaching 27°C ...". The Mondeo I'm driving doesn't have air conditioning and the broadcast just serves to taunt me.

"Pembroke...I wish I was in Pembroke" begins the mantra. Myself, Dawn & James have arranged to meet at Charles' for 6.00pm to commence the journey there. I have doubts about escaping London in that time. My concerns prove valid and wearily I ring Charles from the office at 5.40pm to let him know I'll be late. I also inform him that I'd prefer to take my car as one more hour without air conditioning and I'll melt away. But don't worry Charles the Volvo will have its day.

Careful packing ensures everything fits into the boot and with Charles at the helm we speed towards our destination. Various comments about babies and large cars and it's the first time I've seen you ... come from a young lady in the back. James talks about a garden wild life survey he is undertaking. Charles & I agree we'll let him know next time we see Tigers or Elephants trashing the roses in our respective gardens. Somewhere in amongst all this talk is the thread of a

(Continued on page 11)

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conversation but begged if I can follow it.

The M25 is solid as usual and we divert via Oxford and Swindon to join M4 a little further up. James is convinced we could have taken a shorter route, but would it have been quicker?

Looking for somewhere to stop for a drink and some food, James picks out the Cross-Hands at Willicombe Down from the Real Ale Guide. Leaving junction 17 of the M4 we cross the motorway a further 3 times before eventually falling upon the village. Here we enjoy a nice pint. An entertainer with a voice to make karaoke sound sweeter than honey unfortunately mars this.



Charles demonstrates his culinary skills by ordering some microwave pies from the barmaid. We don't stay for a second pint and taking over the driving I get us to the campsite in just under two hours.

With the tents up we drift off into our personal dreamlands. Charles kicking me in the head as he dreams of being the "Karate Kid" of Hertford occasionally interrupts mine.

Come morning and the heat wave has all but dissipated



with occasional squalls blowing in from the sea. Breakfast beckons and after a short time we find ourselves in a café wiping the sleep from our eyes.

Alfie, Joanne & Nick turn up not long after. They would have been earlier but for PC202. Alfie demonstrating how not to get to Pembroke in the shortest time. They'd also stood outside our tents for about 20 minutes trying to wake us up, sad really.

At this point the rain decided to make its debut. After procrastinating for an hour or so the rain refused to go away and so we went surfing. All toggged up having hired "the kit" we proceeded to demonstrate the art of "useless". In over 3 hours of trying I think we managed about 30 seconds of standing up between 6 of us. But having said that it was bloody good addictive fun.

Come 3pm and the sun shone and proceeded to shine for the rest of the day. The rock dried quickly and soon we were to be found on a section of rock not more than 10 minutes walk from the campsite. Here we climbed till about 7.30pm before hunger took over and once more we headed back to St David's. Here Norman had already made his way with his wife, and soon joined us after finishing their food.

The evening passed pleasantly with almost everybody smoking a communal cigar and drinking whisky by the end of it. Returning to the campsite James & I tried to liberate a sign to "Haverfordwest" from a building site but failed miserably. More drinks followed at the site before retiring for the night.

Sunday met with the usual enthusiasm as a number of "stunned slugs" attempted some easy routes about 30 minutes up the Coast. Having sweated beer on the routes with all sense of balance lost we called it a day and after a few more minutes soloing decided to head for home and the wonderful world of work.

Nick Erith

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PETER THOROGOOD

Peter Thorogood was killed in a fall from the Inner Rottal ridge on the Jungfrau on Tuesday 25th August at about midday.

He and Steve Hinshelwood had started the climb from the Rottal refuge the day before but they were caught in bad weather and had to spend the night on the ridge just below the summit.

The next morning they decided to descend but Peter slipped and fell on a traverse. Even though he was roped he fell far enough over the side of the ridge to sustain severe head injuries which proved fatal.

Our thoughts go out to his wife Lynne and her two teenage sons at this difficult time.

Funeral details on page 2

EVENTS DIARY

DATE	LOCATION	REDCOAT
1998		
Sept 11th-13th	Liverpool M. C. Hut, Ffestiniog	Albert Sillwood
October 2nd-4th		Charles White
October 20th	Speaker	Dawn Wyllie
October 23rd-25th	Lake District	Dawn Wyllie
Sunday shopping	Outside, Hathersage	Stepan Ptacek
November 3rd 8.30pm	The notorious members slideshow	Dawn Wyllie
November 6th-8th	Bangers & Mash, Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales	Dawn Wyllie
December 3rd 8.30pm	David Hamilton, Latest Lecture	Dawn Wyllie
December 4th-6th	Christmas Party, Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales	Jane Whitrow
1999		
Saturday Nights	Kudos Club, Watford	Nick Erith
Jan 16th-17th	George Starkey, Lake District	TBA
Jan 30th-31st	Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales: Speaker,	TBA
Anytime Now	The Moving House Experience	Dave Whitrow
Feb 20th-21st	Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales	TBA
March 13th-14th	Annual Dinner, Yorkshire Dales or Moors	Dawn Wyllie
Tue 6th April at 20.00	Annual General Meeting, Goat Pub, Codicote	Phil Whitehurst
April 10th-11th	Don Whillans Hut, Roaches	TBA
May 8th-9th	Cornwall	TBA
May 29th-31st	Glen Brittle, Skye, Scotland	TBA
Nov 5th-7th	Bangers & Mash, Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales	TBA
Dec 11th-12th	Christmas Party, Snowdonia Centre, N. Wales	TBA
Easter 2000	Trek / Climb, Morocco	Contact Gary Bebb if interested

ABBE LAWThER & COLIN VASEY

I am pleased to report the wedding on Friday 21 August 98 of Abbe Lawther & Colin Vasey at St Mary's Church Knebworth Park and afterwards at the Priory Barn, Little Wymondley. The club sends it congratulations and we look forward to seeing you both on a forthcoming meet.

CHILE '98



31st Jan - 1st March '98

Travelling West. The Sun lingers for one last moment. My eyes scan the clouds below, the shadows, and the forms, graduations of colour. As the light fades the world is once more reduced to the confines of the plane. A familiar environment, after 8 months of weekly commuting to Ireland. Work has ground me down, subdued, and enslaved me. This time the flight is the beginning of my therapy. The destination is Chile.

Santiago, the capital, has over 4 million inhabitants. Each one, it seems, wishes to invite us to stay with them. We are flight weary, disorientated, and hoping our baggage will make an appearance. Eventually they turn up, and after fighting off 3ft dwarf porters, we carry them through customs, acquiring our travel documents (permits) at the same time; a process far easier than doom merchants back home had led us to believe. Having caught a bus into the city, and found accommodation, nothing more happens for 3 hours. We sleep!

Having rested a while we begin our tour. With only half a day available we devote a few hours to just getting orientated and chilling out. A visit to the Museo de Santiago in Casa Colorado forms part of this tour. Here spread before us is the capital's history; documented in maps, dioramas, paintings and mock-ups of the colonial dress. History, never a favourite at school, now fascinates me. Travel does this. By 2am we find ourselves in a "lively" nightclub where everything that is sinful is freely and frequently offered to us. Some propositions are more direct than others are.

Early the next day we take the Funicular and then the 2000m Teleférico up to Pedro De Valdivia, overlooking the sprawling city. From here we plan our time, before starting our adventures for real. It is also a time of realisation, as until these early moments, the trip can but remain a dream. The next two days are spent in a hedonistic haze of

hospitality. Absorbing the tastes, smells and rhythms of our New World we are slowly being seduced. Santiago has loosened our clothing, teased our tongues, and wet our lips.

South to Los Angeles. The train rumbles on in romanticism long since lost in England. With our fellow travellers we talk of our lives, share photographs of family, and laugh at the worries of Western life.

Wave after wave crash over the side of the dinghy. The oars seem powerless against the overwhelming forces. Rocks the size of bungalows and gaps that barely merit the title need to be negotiated. Rafting the Biblio has been heightened by an effect called Nino. This warm offshore current has brought with it increased precipitation, now translated into white water. Somehow we survive, entering an afterlife of bumped and bloodied elbows, wobbly knees, and wet torsos. Post adrenalin rush I'm glowing. For the first few minutes most of us are silent, absorbing the moment.

Next it's Parque Nacional Laguna Del Laja. The centre piece lake was formed when Volcano Antico erupted and Lava blocked the Rio Laja. We head south to the Sierra Vellada and encounter impressive hanging glaciers and volcanic forms. Many birds are seen, most of which, to our shame, we are unable to identify. The condor we can. It's sheer grace, size,



and movement as it soars the thermals, stopping us dead in our tracks.

After 4 days or so it's time to head on to Temuco and thence onto Parque Nacional Villarrica. The centre piece Volcano at 9400ft is our target. Still active (although it hasn't erupted since 1971) and smouldering, there is potential for some exciting times. Together with 4 others we hire a guide and equipment in Pucon. Floundering through unconsolidated snow, we make the smouldering summit and